

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**SPECIAL OLYMPICS PA'S 29TH ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL HOSTED BY  
VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY, NOV. 10 – 12**

***Weekend Kicks-Off with Unified Torch Run and Ends with Appearances by Coach Jay Wright & Special Olympics CEO Mary Davis***

**(Norristown, PA, November 1, 2017)** – Special Olympics Pennsylvania's Fall Festival returns to Villanova University for the 29th consecutive year from November 10-12, 2017, and will welcome approximately 1,200 coaches, athletes and Unified Partners representing 40 Pennsylvania county programs. Participants will compete in bocce, long distance running/walking, powerlifting, roller skating, soccer (individual skills, 5v5, 7v7, 11v11), and volleyball (team & individual skills). Villanova's campus, located at 800 E. Lancaster Avenue, will take an "Adventure through Time" with a campus-wide theme that celebrates Special Olympics' timeless victories. A Unified Fall Festival Torch Run will kick the weekend off at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia followed by Opening Ceremonies in Villanova Stadium that will feature live entertainment including Melmark's hand-bell choir, the Joybells; the Villanova Dance Company; and the Philadelphia Eagles Cheerleaders. In addition, the weekend will offer Healthy Athletes® screenings; an "Olympic Town" festival providing athlete activities in-between sporting events; a Victory Dance; and Closing Ceremonies.

Special Olympics Pennsylvania's (SOPA) Fall Festival is regarded as the largest university student-run Special Olympics event in the world led by Villanova University's Special Olympics Committee that assists SOPA in the event organization. The University also donates all of its facilities and serves as the event's principle volunteer base under the leadership of this year's director Hannah Durnin, a student who served as Finance Assistant and Fundraising Chair in the past. Durnin heads the over 100-person student committee.

Fall Festival weekend will kick-off with the [Unified Fall Festival Torch Run](#), a 26 mile non-competitive run consisting of 18 segments from Citizens Bank Park to Villanova University on Nov. 10th beginning at 9:30am. Hundreds of runners representing law enforcement officers, athletes, elected officials, schools and businesses will traverse through the city of Philadelphia, into Bala Cynwyd, and through the heart of the Main Line to Villanova for Opening Ceremonies. Opening Ceremonies will begin at 7:30pm at Villanova Stadium and conclude with the lighting of the Olympic Torch to signify the official start of the Games. The Olympic Torch will be carried by participants of the Unified Fall Festival Torch Run.

Athletes will begin preliminary competitions on Nov. 10th in bocce, soccer, roller skating and volleyball. Powerlifting and long distance running competitions begin on Nov. 11th. Roller skating competitions will take place at the Marple Sports Arena, 611 South Park Way in Broomall, PA. Soccer 5v5 and Bocce will be held at The Shipley School, 814 Yarrow Street in Bryn Mawr, PA; and Volleyball competitions will be held at Agnes Irwin, 275 S Ithan Ave, Bryn Mawr, PA. Soccer 11v11 competitions will take place at Agnes Irwin on Friday and at the Villanova Stadium on Saturday. All other activities will take place at Villanova University. Closing Ceremonies will be held in the Jake Nevin Field House on Nov. 12th at 1:00pm. This year's Closing Ceremonies will feature appearances by Special Olympics CEO Mary Davis, Villanova Coach Jay Wright, 'Spread the Word to End the Word' Co-Founder Soeren Palumbo, and drawings for the [2018 Special Olympics USA Games](#) and [2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games](#). [Click here](#) to view a complete Fall Festival schedule of events.

Several Healthy Athletes® activities will be available to Fall Festival participants in a variety of ways this year on Nov. 11th and Nov. 12th:

**Special Olympics Pennsylvania**

2570 Blvd. of the Generals, Suite 124, Norristown, PA, 19403 Tel + (610) 630-9450 Toll Free + (800) 235-9058 Fax + (610) 630-9456

[www.specialolympicspa.org](http://www.specialolympicspa.org)

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- **Healthy Athletes®:** is a program in which volunteer health care professionals provide free health screenings and education to Special Olympics athletes. Healthy Athletes is made up of six disciplines including Special Smiles, Fit Feet, Healthy Hearing, Opening Eyes, Health Promotions and FUNfitness. Healthy Athletes will be held on Nov. 11th from 9am – 5pm and Nov. 12th from 9am – 12pm in Driscoll Hall.
- **Healthy Habits:** are interactive education stations that help build awareness of how healthy habits affect sport performance and everyday life. Healthy Habits will be held on Nov. 11th from 11am – 4pm and Nov. 12th from 9am – 12pm in Driscoll Hall.
- **Active Athletes:** offers free group exercise classes, games/activities and stretching led by trained volunteers. Active Athletes will be held on Nov. 11th from 9:00am – 3pm and Sunday from 9am – 12:00pm in Driscoll Hall.
- **Young Athletes:** is a unique sport and play program for children with intellectual disabilities. The focus is on immersing children ages 2-7 in fun activities that are important to mental and physical growth. Young Athletes will be held on Nov. 11th from 9:30am – 2:30pm at The Ellipse/The Exchange.

More than 6,000 volunteers from the Villanova student body and the surrounding community are expected to participate in the event this year, serving in numerous capacities including as officials, athlete escorts, award presenters, and administrative support services. Volunteers from across the state are welcome and spectators are encouraged to visit any of the competition venues on or near campus to cheer on the athletes. For more information about volunteering, visit the official Villanova University Fall Festival Web site at [specialolympics.villanova.edu](http://specialolympics.villanova.edu).

The 2017 Fall Festival major event sponsors include Premier State-wide partner Sheetz, Inc.; Presenting Sponsor TD Bank; GEICO; Aerotek; Harmelin Media; Grand Council R & S Master Masons; Philadelphia Insurance Companies; Villanova; Kessler, Topaz, Meltzer + Check; Delaware County Daily Times; Law Enforcement Torch Run; David & Marjorie D. Rosenberg Foundation; Finish Line; KPMG Huntington Bank; Wawa; Sam's Club; PECO; De Lage Landen; Acme Corrugated Box Co.; Melmark; Knights of Columbus; Haverford Trust; ACME; Lions District 14A Charitable Foundation; Walmart; Montgomery County Intermediate Unit #23; The Snider Foundation; The Philadelphia Foundation; & Villanova School of Business.

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#### ***About Special Olympics Pennsylvania***

Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) provides year-round training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports to nearly 20,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience joy. For more information, visit our web site at [www.specialolympicspa.org](http://www.specialolympicspa.org).

#### ***About Villanova University***

Since 1842, Villanova University's Augustinian Catholic intellectual tradition has been the cornerstone of an academic community in which students learn to think critically, act compassionately and succeed while serving others. There are more than 10,000 undergraduate, graduate and law students in the University's six colleges – the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Villanova School of Business, the College of Engineering, the College of Nursing the Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law, and The College of Professional Studies. [Click here](#) for more information on Villanova University.

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